

New Bernal Journal

February-March 2008 • Vol. 45 • Number 1

SERVING THE BERNAL HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD OF SAN FRANCISCO SINCE 1964



JOSEPH SMOOKE

20th Annual BHNC Toy Drive a Success

By Kathryn Napolio
Mayor Youth Employment Program Employee

Some of you may know about the Bernal Heights annual toy give away that took place on December 18th. The annual BHNC toy giveaway is a wonderful event that the Community Organizers and Youth Department organize every year in order to give presents and spread holiday cheer to residents from our community. This includes Holly Courts, Excelsior District, Alemany Housing and various parts of Bernal Heights. We distribute wrapped gifts to children ages 2-12, provide snacks and refreshments, give children the opportunity to take a picture with Santa Claus.

This year’s 20th Annual Toy give away was a major success. It started off with us—the the Mayor’s Youth Employment and Education (MYEEP) youth workers—coming in to wrap 700+ presents, all in beautiful, shiny wrapping paper. I enjoyed wrapping these presents, because about twenty of us workers came in and the BHNC provided cookies and other little snacks. Overall there was a great, cheerful atmo-

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Milestones for Housing in 2007

By Shannon Dodge

Although best known for providing needed services at the Neighborhood Center on Cortland and the Excelsior Teen Center, BHNC is also a developer. Since 1982, Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center has created affordable housing for more than 500 low income families, seniors, and individuals. As a landlord, BHNC goes beyond the “bricks and mortar” to build and sustain supportive residential communities, and nearly half of BHNC’s apartments offer supportive services to the residents.

Initially located just in Bernal Heights, BHNC’s affordable homes comprised both newly built housing and acquisition of existing buildings. But with the growing challenges of finding sites and funding, flexibility is key, so for the past 15 years our housing development has not been constrained exclusively to Bernal Heights. Current BHNC housing developments are underway in both the South of Market and the Richmond district, and 2007 saw major milestones for both.

In December, BHNC broke ground on 134 mini-studios at 10th and Folsom Streets in the South of Market District, the reward for over three years of planning and fundraising. Called “Bishop Swing Community House,” it’s a partnership with

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NBJ EN ESPAÑOL

Comienza la Llamada para Miembros 2008!

Por Joseph Smooke

Nuestro Gobernador anunció una reducción de gastos publicos en educación, CalWorks, y muchos otros programas sociales vitales, y nuestro Alcalde pronosticó un deficit en el presupuesto que resultará en cortes a todos los servicios humanos que dependen de fondos públicos locales. Hoy, más que nunca, es importante ser un miembro de BHNC

Cada dólar que recibimos de miembros de la comunidad, familias, y amigos es devuelto a la comunidad – tu comunidad – de manera que ser un miembro apoya nuestro desarrollo de viviendas para personas con bajos ingresos, nuestros servicios directos para jóvenes y mayores, y nuestro trabajo organizando a la comunidad.

Como un miembro, no solo apoyas el trabajo de BHNC que te beneficia directamente al construir una comunidad fuerte todos los dias, también recibirás el *New Bernal Journal* en el correo cada dos meses! Probablemente el mayor beneficio es


Nuestros miembros son absolutamente esenciales.

ser un “miembro votante” de BHNC: un “miembro votante” puede votar para los candidatos de nuestra Junta Directiva, y puede ser un candidato para nuestra Junta Directiva. Cómo puedes ser un “miembro votante”? Primero manda tu cuota de miembros! Después, si vives o trabajas en Bernal Heights, o si recibes servicios de nuestros Programas para Jóvenes o Mayores, o si vives en una de las viviendas de BHNC, o si eres un voluntario que apoya a

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HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS IN SENIOR PROGRAMS

JOSEPH SMOOKE



By Janine Hudak

It was a festive holiday season here at BHNC Senior Programs. We had our annual holiday luncheon and celebration for Active Seniors in our senior center, the Senior Star Gift program, and holiday meal deliveries to the homebound. For the seventh year in a row, these programs were supported by funds from the Walter and Elise Haas Senior Fund.

Holiday Luncheon

On December 14, the seniors enjoyed a delicious holiday luncheon consisting of a home-made meal with turkey and all the fixings. The meal was cooked and served with TLC by BHNC staff to over 100 guests, and the San Francisco Food Bank donated the turkeys. Seniors decorated the dining room with seasonal artwork created in our arts and crafts class and homemade ornaments for our Christmas tree. Attendees were entertained by wonderful volunteer performers such as Virginia O’Hanlon’s Afro Caribbean Latin Dance Class and Jenny Reed and Friends.

Senior Star Program

It was another successful year for the popular Senior Star Program, now in its seventh season at BHNC. Over the years, there has been an outstanding collaboration between BHNC, volunteers, community members, and local organizations in creating a memorable holiday moment for homebound and low income seniors, as

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The New Bernal Journal is a neighborhood newspaper published by the Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center. It is dedicated to providing the people of Bernal Heights with their community's news, ideas, issues, and events which support the center's mission:

Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center works to preserve and enhance the ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity of Bernal Heights and surrounding neighborhoods. We promote community action to build a just and equitable community for all. BHNC focuses on the needs of people with low and moderate incomes. We work to accomplish our mission by:

- Developing affordable housing throughout San Francisco;
- Providing linguistically and culturally responsive services to our community's most vulnerable adults, seniors, youth, and their families;
- Developing leaders; organizing and empowering our tenants, clients, members, and allies to advocate for their needs and for the needs of the community.

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Please make all computer disk submissions in PC format, or e-mail them to nbj@bhnc.org



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Many thanks to all of you: your support contributed to a successful 2007 and makes us optimistic as we head into 2008, our 30th Anniversary Year! Individual contributions are increasingly important to the future of BHNC, and 2007 saw a renewed strengthening of our membership base, the core of our fundraising and community organizing efforts.

As our 2008 Membership Drive begins, we extend special thanks to the Taproot Foundation. Their team of supremely dedicated volunteers have been working for months to design a new database for BHNC, as the one we've been using for years is literally disintegrating into digital refuse. Scheduled to be operationalized with Salesforce software in the Spring of 2008, the database designed by the Taproot team efforts will increase our ability to communicate with all of you, raise funds, and be more effective with our community organizing work.

Our foundation fundraising was very successful in 2007 as we were able to leverage all of the support from you community members. New to our pantheon of foundation funders are Gap Foundation, California Wellness, and the Sandy Foundation, as well as an essential infrastructure grant from the Neighborhood Centers Together coalition. These come on the heels of a major two-year grant from the Bank of America Foundation: in 2005, we won a major award from B of A for their Neighborhood Excellence national program that helped to sustain and build BHNC's strength through 2006 and 2007.

Government support is always critical as well, and Supervisor Ammiano and our brothers and sisters at Alemany public housing have worked together over many months to fund and implement supportive services for Alemany residents. This hard work culminated in December with the opening of the long-awaited Alemany Computer Lab and a heartfelt community celebration. We at BHNC are happy to support not just the opening

of the Alemany Computer Lab, but the presence of our Job Developer, Tina Nguyen, who holds weekly office hours at the Alemany Computer Lab for youth and young adults in the community.

Another tremendous step forward for the community at Alemany has been the filling of vacancies. Although 30 of the 150 units at Alemany had been vacant and boarded up, BHNC staff organizers and Alemany residents working together with the Alemany Working Group has resulted in, at this time, fifteen of these units being renovated and occupied, with the remaining units soon to be occupied as well.

One area of potential concern for BHNC in 2008 is that the owner of the building in which our Excelsior Teen Center operates has decided to sell the building. BHNC submitted a bid to purchase but two offers came in higher than our bid. We are currently waiting to see if either these two bids fall through, or if we will be contacted by the new owner. We may need for people to write letters of support to the new owner letting them know we need to stay in this space, so please contact me if you want to help out. You will certainly hear from us either way if we do need letters and phone calls of support.

In 2007, the City's Department of Children, Youth and Families honored BHNC's role as the "Convener" for Bernal Heights by providing us with support for our services and institutions. A highlight of this work will be a community meeting at BHNC on February 7 at 6pm which will be a prelude to our biggest community meeting of the year, our Community Congress scheduled for Saturday, May 17. Save these dates!

As always, there is so much more going on, so enjoy this first NBJ of the year. I hope you all have a fulfilling 2008, and happy reading!

—Joseph Smooke
Executive Director, Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center

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Many thanks to all who contributed to our Senior Holiday Events

Special thanks to the Walter & Elise Haas Senior Fund for the 7th year of underwriting many of the costs for these holiday activities.

Other fabulous holiday contributors

San Francisco Food Bank turkeys galore

Wind in the Willows Preschool for organizing a food drive for our homebound clients

Jane Krivich for organizing food deliveries to our homebound clients

Antoinette Meza for organizing food deliveries to our homebound clients

Parkview Middle School Students Allie McCann's class for making fabulous gift bags

Virginia O'Hanlon's Afro-Caribbean/Latin Dance Class for providing fine entertainment

Jenny Reed and Friends for providing fine entertainment

The BHNC Staff, NEST and Active Volunteers

Holiday Meal Delivery Volunteers

Sharee Anzaldo	Birgit Eschmann	Howard Li
Ed Brake	Natalie Krelle-Zepponi & Family	Eva Luo
Stephanie Carter	Omar & Jorge	Jovanna Luque
Grace Cheng	Jeri Robinson & Family	Nicole McGrath & Family
Jen Embody	Cynthia Strickland	Georgia Willette

All Community Senior Star Givers

Katixa Aboitiz	Joellen Brothers	Barbara Paley
Lori Benson	Stephanie Kelley & Family	Allison Perry
Robin Blackstone	Faith Kirkpatrick	Alexandre Petrakis
Judy Bley	Lyla Kraft	Mary Twomey & Carol Yaoog
Carol Cartwell & Rachel Lanzerotti	Aileen Kositsky	Sophia Green
Kevin Kitchingham	Sarah Watanabe & Bella Johnson	Tina Nguyen
Maya & Mike Farrah	Justine L-Strebler	Steve Shapiro
Mary Fitzgerald	Jovanna Luque	Gail Williams
Patricia Friedrichs	Beth Myers	

BHNC PROGRAMS

SENIORS

TIP FOR TAP

Dean Catiis Teaches Seniors the Joys of Tap

By Jeff Lester

The dancers in Dean Catiis' Wednesday tap class at BHNC are a devoted lot: although the class technically starts at 1:30 pm, dancers begin to show up at the top of the hour to prepare the room for the class, clean up, compare notes and ready themselves. At some point, someone will put on their shoes and start to tap. It's a sound that starts in isolation, like rain beginning to fall on a corrugated roof, but then another dancer starts to tap, and the two fall into rhythm, and suddenly the sound becomes regular, like water boiling in a pot, and infectious. As it builds, the staccato snaps begin to pop, and the other dancers speed up their preparation. A button is pushed, a familiar piano melody prances from the boom-box on the back table, and prerecorded voices warble "One" from *A Chorus Line*. Suddenly eight women have taken their place in two lines, wordlessly, their feet snapping out a peppy counterpoint to the music. The two lines bow and bend and then break, as the dancers iris-in to a circle, clicking, before turning and dilating out—the view from the upstairs copier would resemble something from a Busby Berkeley musical—lining up again to finish the song off with a full-blown, high-kicking chorus line. The song ends, the dancers clap, nod, and compliment each other, and someone goes over to start the

song so they can do it again.

"The most rewarding part about teaching this class," confesses teacher Dean Catiis, who has been working with the Senior Tap Group for almost fourteen months, "is that these ladies [and gentleman] really want to be here."

Lupe Bravo, one of his students, agrees: "I live for Wednesday afternoon. I find as a senior, the trick to feeling young is to always keep learning, always be doing something, always trying something new."

As a teacher, Catiis is affable, constantly asking questions to the class generally or to specific individuals—"What count do you turn on? Right, *seven*. So let's do it again." "Jim, how many counts of eight before you turn?"—and willing to stop what he's saying to answer any question offered. He's what everyone would want from a teacher: very friendly, very clear, and very serious about his subject. Although Catiis is constantly critiquing the performance of each performer, fine-tuning each step again and again, the instruction is constantly peppered with praise: "That sounded so much better," "I'm really impressed at how much everyone's retained over the break," "That was wonderful. I think you're ready to try it a little faster."

Surprisingly, Catiis has never taught before. "When you're dance captain in a show, you have to be able to show steps to



Catiis (inset) has been working with his class of thirteen seniors (above) for over a year.

Class is all about having fun, making mistakes, and being big, because that's how you learn.

others, but this is my first time teaching." But if it turns out that Catiis is a natural teacher, perhaps that shouldn't be so surprising: years ago, acclaimed choreographer Berle Davis pulled Catiis, then primarily a singer, aside at a rehearsal and asked where Catiis had studied dance. When Catiis confessed he had *never* studied, Davis invited Catiis to study at Davis' studio. "He saw something in me, in the way I moved, that he thought he could develop," Catiis explains.

Davis, who had studied under instructor and San Francisco tap legend Stanley Kahn, was right to follow his instincts: Catiis went on to dance the tap leads in *42nd Street*, *Anything Goes*, *Crazy For You*, and other shows in the Bay Area for more than a decade before being sidelined with an injury and moving into the field of real estate.

"Berle really focuses on technique," says Catiis, "and that's something I try to bring to the class here. Class is all about having fun, making mistakes, being big, because that's how you learn, but technique makes everything easier, makes it better."

"What are the three things I want you to work on?" Catiis asks in class, calling on dancers for answers. "Yes. Counting; dancing at a performance level; and having fun. And what do we mean by dancing at a performance level?" He waits while the dancers offer up their answers. "That's right. Smile; heads held up; and looking at the audience."

"He's a real pro," says student Bravo. "He wants us to develop good technique, learn good habits and unlearn any bad habits we might have picked up."

The good habits are paying off, as the class continues to prepare a big musical number it'll be performing in summer. Catiis and his class smile and laugh as they run through the first part of the song for the last half-hour of class, focusing and refining their movements. "Remember," Catiis tells them, "Bigger is better in rehearsal, because it's easier to shrink it down for a performance than it is to bring it out."

Finally, at the very end of class, the first half comes together and the thirteen seniors tap gracefully through the song's opening, crossing and re-crossing the floor—smiling, heads held high—with Catiis—the prodigal student now the prodigal teacher—looking on in approval as a voice from the speakers sings:

"When trumpets were mellow
And every gal only had one fellow
No need to remember when
'Cause everything old is new again."

COVER STORY

Senior Holiday Programs

continued from page 1

well as providing friendship and a warm meal. Community members chose a star that represents a personal gift wish from a homebound or disabled senior. They purchase and return the wrapped gift, which is then delivered to the recipient. This year, 85 gifts were donated and 50 holiday meals with food gift bags were delivered to the clients by volunteers. We've had an outpouring of generosity from the community and we give a heartfelt thank you to all who participated.

Judy Bley is a member of BHNC and has been a resident of Bernal Heights for 32 years. She has participated in the Senior Star Program for approximately five years, each year choosing a few more "Stars" to which to give gifts. After she learned about the program through the *New Bernal Journal*, she decided to participate "because as a senior myself, I became concerned with the needs of seniors, particularly those on a limited income," she said. She recalls that "once I received a thank you card from a lady in her late 80s who asked for a small portable radio. I purchased one and (after reading the card) was surprised and touched that something so simple and inexpensive could make such an impact on someone's life." Ms. Bley mentioned that she also encourages her friends to participate in the Senior Star program.

Mrs. Roselee Higdon, one of the recipients, said the timing was just right to receive the holiday meal right before Christmas. "I really needed the meal and I really enjoyed the food." She requested a talking clock as her gift wish and she said she was very surprised and pleased when she learned it was purchased for her.

Wind in the Willows Preschool first



Christmas carols Hawaiian style!

became involved with the Senior Star Program last year when they collectively purchased gifts for over 20 Senior Stars. Natalie Krelle-Zepponi, who is both a parent and current Board Member of the school, coordinated efforts this year, which consisted of preparing a food drive to create 50 gift bags of nutritious food and snacks for our homebound clients. When asked how the school became involved, she replied, "Many families who attend Wind in the Willows preschool are from Bernal Heights, so our outreach with BHNC was a natural connection. The kids got to help select food items, place them in the collection bin, and develop an understanding of why and for whom the food was provided. Some of us even had a chance to deliver the food bags with the holiday meal."

She adds, "All around, it was a fulfilling experience that rounded out the holiday season. Many thanks to BHNC for including us in their outreach."

Into the New Year...

After the holidays, let's keep the spirit going into the New Year. The homebound seniors will still need attention, especially as the weather gets cold and rainy, with grocery delivery, medical appointments, and friendly visits. We are now actively recruiting new volunteers that can provide this important outreach work. Please call the Volunteer Coordinator at 415-206-2140, ext. 130 for further details. ■

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BHNC PROGRAMS
ORGANIZING

MORE CUTS AT ST. LUKE'S
Access to Health Care at Risk

By Jane Martin

Despite community outrage, Sutter CPMC is cutting more services at St. Luke's Hospital, and plan to close St. Luke's as a hospital by 2009. St Luke's is the only hospital other than S.F. General serving the poorest neighborhoods in the

ceive care. Although a non-profit, Sutter CPMC chooses to provide more luxury services to wealthier neighborhoods, rather than investing in communities of need. Many of their doctors don't take MediCal, fewer staff speak Spanish or other languages common in our neighborhoods, and the other campuses do not

THE COALITION TO SAVE ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL

SAVE the DATE!
Community Vigil at St. Luke's
February 13, 2008 • 5pm

For information of get involved in planning this event please contact community organizer Jane Martin (415) 240-1680 x 155 jmartin@bhnc.org

Southeast sector of the city. While Sutter CMPC, the non-profit owner of the hospital, claims they can no longer absorb their losses at St. Luke's, public health officials are anxious about where patients will go if the hospital closes. Dr. Mitch Katz, head of the Department of Public Health, says that San Francisco General cannot absorb even half the volume of patients who use St. Luke's.

Although Sutter CPMC claims they can continue to serve St. Luke's patients at their hospitals north of Market Street, such as their Pacific Heights campus, this plan ignores the reality that their other campuses are too far away to get to in an emergency and more difficult for people to visit hospitalized family or re-

offer the same community based services as St. Luke's. "At CPMC's other campuses located in richer neighborhoods there are plasma TVs in every room, but [CPMC] do not provide the kind of care our community needs," said Jane Sandoval, a nurse speaking at a rally outside the hospital.

In December, Sutter nurses demanding that St. Luke's stay open as a hospital went on strike for 2 days. During the strike, supporters rallied outside the hospital and San Francisco Supervisors Tom Ammiano and Ross Mirkarimi spoke, decrying the discriminatory impact the proposed closure would have on African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and others residents in the lower income neighbor-

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING CHARTER AMENDMENT

By Kimberly Alvarenga

Over the years, as thousands of families have had to leave San Francisco because they could no longer afford to live here, we have seen the demographics of neighborhoods completely change. As high rises, million dollar homes, and condominiums continue to spring up all over our city, access to affordable housing has become one of the most important and pressing issues facing San Franciscans.

On January8th, the Board of Supervisors took a proactive step toward addressing the need for affordable housing by voting to place a historic measure on the November 2008 ballot. "Housing talk without action is political rhetoric," said Supervisor McGoldrick, from the Richmond District. Bernal Heights resident and co-sponsor of the measure, Supervisor Tom Ammiano, characterized the historic vote as an opportunity to "seize the day and seize the moment for change."

If passed in November, the measure, by amending the City's Charter, will create a set-aside within the City's general fund that will provide an estimated \$33 million each year for the next fifteen years for affordable housing, establish a baseline for housing programs to preserve the existing funding committed historically by the City for affordable housing programs, and create an annual community input process so our communities can tell the City the priorities for spending these funds. The broad coalition that worked on this Charter Amendment has also been hard at work on a measure to increase revenue flowing into the general fund so as to offset the potential impact of the set-aside.

The Affordable Housing Charter Amendment is the result of the work of a city-wide coalition of community based organizations, activists, housing advocates, labor and eight Supervisors. Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center is part of this coalition, and our members will be working hard to pass this and any accompanying revenue measure in November 2008. ■

If you would like more information about the affordable housing Charter Amendment, or would like to join our members in their organizing efforts, please contact Kimberly Alvarenga, BHNC Organizing Director at (415) 206-2140 Ext. 149, or via email at kalvarenga@bhnc.org.

hoods that surround St. Luke's.

Neo Natal (newborn) Intensive Care, is the next department up on the chopping block: although, after public outcry, Sutter delayed the closure of this unit in order to comply with city law, closure has been rescheduled for February 13. Though the hospital plans to replace the unit with some sort of less acute neo-natal care this plan baffles St. Luke's doctors and nurses. "Sutter plans to create a 'special care nursery,' a type of unit they invented which has no basis in state regulations: they cannot produce verification from the State of any authorization for this unit, and the plans depends on transporting the sickest babies to CPMC's California Campus. This plan won't work because, among other concerns, many California Campus transport nurses have resigned from the transport team from fear for losing their licenses because of poor staffing and management," says Nato Green for the California Nurses Association. "It's just one more cut in the constant erosion of services at St. Luke's."

Community groups and patients are growing more and more concerned. Though Sutter CPMC claims it wants to enter a dialogue about the future of the

hospital—in city hearings over the past months their representatives have repeatedly presented the same plan to close the hospital that community members reject.

In response to this ongoing crisis, community groups, patients, doctors, nurses, St. Luke's staff and their unions have all joined together in the Coalition to Save St. Luke's Hospital, which also includes organizations serving the elderly, minority, at risk youth, low income, mentally ill, and homeless people—those who will suffer the most should Sutter CPMC's plan be implemented. Community groups from the Mission, the Excelsior, Bay View Hunter's Point and Bernal Heights Neighborhoods are also participating.

The Coalition met in December and January to launch a vigorous plan to protest and draw public attention to the plight of the community hospital, and all patients and community members are invited to participate in the upcoming Community Vigil and future events. "It's critical that people get involved. It's coming down to the wire; we have to fight to keep this hospital!" said Eva Royale a community activist participating in the coalition. ■

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The 2008 Membership Campaign Begins!

By Joseph Smooke

With the Governor announcing huge cuts to education, CalWorks, and many vital social programs, and with our Mayor forecasting a local budget shortfall that will result in cuts to all locally funded human services, being a BHNC member is more important now than ever.

Every dollar we receive from community members, family, and friends is put

Membership is absolutely essential to continuing to do the work that makes this organization—and this community—so great.

back into the community—your community—as every membership supports our affordable housing development work, our direct support services to youth and seniors, and our community organizing.

As a member, not only do you support BHNC’s work that directly benefits you because of the strong community we build every day, but you also receive the New Bernal Journal mailed directly to you every two months! Probably the greatest benefit is imparted to “voting members” of BHNC: A “voting member” can vote for candidates to our Board of Directors and gets to be a candidate to serve on our Board. How do you get to be a voting

member? First, send in your membership dues! Then, if you live or work in Bernal Heights, if you receive services from our Youth or Senior Program staff, if you live in a BHNC owned building, or if you volunteer to support BHNC’s work, then you are a “voting member”!

We’re currently in the middle of our 2008 membership drive. Unlike other membership based organizations, we can’t suspend our broadcast until we meet our membership goals, but like those other organizations, membership is absolutely essential to our continuing to do the work that makes this organization—and this community—so great. Your membership gives us the organizational strength to continue to provide essential screenings and food and health education to our seniors on very low fixed incomes; provide cultural, positive growth and employment opportunities for our youth; and develop permanent affordable housing. It also supports our Community Organizing work to save services at St Luke’s Hospital, reduce violence in our community, advocate for affordable housing, and support locally owned businesses.

At press time, we’ve already got over 30 members which is a great start toward our goal of over 1,000. Please join or renew today. You can use the Membership Form enclosed here in this issue of the NBJ. We’ve also made it easy for those of you with access to the internet to donate through our web site at www.bhnc.org. Or, if you are in the neighborhood, I invite you to stop by the Neighborhood Center to sign up and see all the great work we’re doing every day. We can’t do it without you! ■



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MIXING IT UP:
Bernal Rec Center Stays Relevant

By V Cooke

Where in Bernal Heights where you can find 2 year olds playing with toy cars, teenagers playing basketball, and seniors exercising, all under one roof? The Bernal Rec Center, behind the library, has all those programs and more! The Rec Center is on its way to becoming a neighborhood asset, under the guidance of Rec and Park district staff in collabora-

The Rec Center directors and their supervisors are changing the look and performance of this important community resource.

tion with the Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center (BHNC). Despite a spotty history of programs, and serious funding limitations from the city, the Rec Center directors and their supervisors are changing the look and performance of this important community resource.

Rec and Park staff have been operating programs out of the Bernal Rec Center since the '70s. Over time, the Rec Center's role went from providing cultural programming and theatre space to being the gym and athletic center it is today. Two years ago, after decades of use and little upkeep, the center was run down, with few programs serving the community.

Two of the obstacles the Rec Center faces are a dramatically shrinking budget and a lack of staffing. According to Linda Barnard of Rec and Park, Mayor Newsom recently imposed a citywide hiring freeze, forcing her to cut programs and have weekly closures at some rec centers. "We are having a really hard time staffing all our sites, and with over

seven sites reopening citywide, we are going to have to do temporary closures at some Rec Centers." However Barnard is fighting to keep the Bernal center open and fully staffed, partially because of the community attention and use of the site.

District staff at Rec and Park, Bob Palacio and Linda Barnard, along with Bernal community members and staff at BHNC all recognized the low performance of the center several years ago. Rec and Park started addressing maintenance problems, hired a full-time custodian, and bought equipment to run programs. At the same time, Bernal neighbors and BHNC started lobbying both Rec and Park and the City to improve programs at the site.

The changes started slowly, but now the Rec Center is responding to the community and offering more quality programs. A range of new programs are being offered at the Rec Center, with more on their way. There is now a popular tiny-tots program in the morning for toddlers. The directors ran a winter camp for the first time with 35 kids participating—and they will do it again in the summer. There is also a new walking program at all the Rec Centers citywide; at Bernal, the director Tom Mayfield leads a walking group twice a week. They track their miles and within a year they will have walked 770 miles, the length of California! In addition to these essential programs, the Rec Center is going to bring in new and innovative programs to reach out to youth in the area. Palacio and Barnard are currently developing DJ class for Bernal where kids will learn how to mix music and create their own CDs. ■

If you would like to use the Bernal Rec Center programs, please contact them at 695-5007. If you would like to get involved in improving programs—including becoming a tutor for underprivileged kids in the neighborhood—please contact V Cooke at BHNC, 206-2140 x 152.



Supervisor Tom Ammiano and Tina Nguyen with members Alemany residents at the opening of their new computer center

Alemany Residents Work with BHNC to Renew Community

By V Cooke

In the past three months, Alemany residents have achieved three key victories to improving safety in Alemany by repairing and renting vacant units, opening a computer center, and bringing in a job developer to help members of the community find work.

A group of residents have been holding regular meetings with community organizers from Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center (BHNC) to work on issues like vacant units, outside lights, and trash collection. Due to years of underfunding by the federal government and chronic mismanagement, it is hard for residents to get even the most essential repairs completed in public housing.

Alemany residents achieved a major victory when the housing authority began repairing vacant units at Alemany with city funding. The Alemany group worked with surrounding Bernal residents, Supervisor Tom Ammiano, Acorn and the Housing Rights Committee to address the problem of vacant units. Currently, 16 of 30 vacant units have been repaired and re-rented, six are repaired and ready to rent, and eight are still waiting for repairs. This is a huge step for the safety of the Alemany and surrounding community because these occupied units are now no longer used by outside drug dealers for illegal activities. Residents are currently working with the housing authority to get adequate outside lighting to make the area safer at night.

The group of Alemany residents is also working with BHNC to explore plans to rebuild Alemany. Rebuilding Alemany would address many issues, including deteriorating housing conditions, isolation from the rest of the neighborhood and safety concerns both within Alemany and in the surrounding neighborhood. Residents and BHNC are working with other groups citywide to insure protections for current Alemany residents if the rebuild occurs. These include protections such as ensuring that all public housing units will be replaced one-for-one, and the right to return if residents are relocated during the construction. This work

continues with meetings in the Alemany community room every several weeks.

On December 16, Alemany public housing opened a state of the art computer center in a grand opening hosted by Alice Caruthers, the executive director of the Alemany RMC, Supervisor Tom Ammiano, and BHNC. Residents of Alemany and their friends gathered to celebrate with prayer, songs, and a Christmas dinner. Alice Caruthers of the RMC said at the opening, "This computer center was created by Alemany residents who are dedicated to making Alemany a better place. It's gonna be a great thing for us as a community."

The Alemany Resident Management Corporation (RMC) named the site the Tom Ammiano Center in honor of the District Supervisor for our neighborhood who helped get the funding to open it. The computer center has two levels: the first level will be a job development center with drop-in hours of 9:30-12:00 Monday mornings and workshops from 4:00-6:00 pm Monday afternoons, run by job developer Tina Nguyen from BHNC. The second level holds the main computer center, which will be open daily and run by Alemany residents.

Another important immediate need in the Alemany community is job training and employment for unemployed or under-employed Alemany residents. BHNC worked with the Alemany RMC to bring in Nguyen, a job developer with the Youth Employment Services (YES) program, who will help her clients to create a resume, cover letter, and master job application. Nguyen is then an advocate and job coach, supporting participants so as to help them succeed in the workforce, which is the goal of the YES program: bringing out a positive and productive side in young adults by matching them with local employers who can give them additional tools to be successful in the work world. "I am ecstatic to be working with the residents at Alemany," said Nguyen. "And my hope is to be a stepping stone for youth looking for a career they can be proud of." ■



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Fridays	6p-8p	Jim Arnstein Piano Jazz

Other Music in February:

Feb. 1	8p	Tonal Recall
Feb. 2	8p	Christie Winn & the Lowdowns
Feb. 7	8p	Michael Coleman Trio
Feb. 8	8p	Herman Hayte
Feb. 9	8p	Rupa & the April Fishes
Feb. 11	8p	Conscious Jazz
Feb. 15	8p	Ton Trio
Feb. 21	8p	Emma Hill and Friends from Portland
Feb. 23	8p	Cottontail with Ralph Carney
Feb. 24	8p	Daniel Fabricant
Feb. 25	8p	Conscious Jazz
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New Bernal Journal en Español

COVER STORY
Llamada para Miembros
continua de página 1

los empleados de BHNC, ya eres un “miembro votante”!

Estamos en el medio de nuestra campaña de miembros del 2008. A diferencia de otras organizaciones a base de miembros, no podemos suspender nuestros anuncios hasta que realizemos nuestros objetivos, pero como otras de esas organizaciones, nuestros miembros son absolutamente esenciales para continuar el trabajo que hace que seamos una gran organizacion y una gran comunidad. Tu apoyo nos da la fuerza organizacional para continuar proveyendo chequeos esenciales y educacion sobre nutrición y salud para nuestros mayors con bajos ingresos; seguir proveyendo oportunidades de empleo y desarrollo cultural para jóvenes; y seguir desarrollando viviendas permanentes para personas de bajos ingresos. También apoyas nuestro trabajo organizando a la comunidad para evitar que eliminen servicios en el hospital St. Luke’s, reducir la violencia en nuestra comunidad, defender las viviendas económicas, y apoyar a los negocios locales.

Al momento de impresión, ya tenemos mas de 70 miembros, un gran comienzo para nuestro objetivo de 1,000. Por favor, únete o renueva hoy! Puedes usar el formulario que aparece en este diario. También hemos facilitado el proceso en nuestra página web: www.bhnc.org, para aquellos de ustedes que tengan acceso a una conexión de internet. O si estas en el barrio, te invito a pasar por el Centro Vecindario y ver todo el gran trabajo que hacemos todos los días. No lo podemos hacer sin ti! ■

Los Residentes de Alemany Trabajan con BHNC para Renovar la Comunidad

por V. Cooke

En los pasados tres meses, residentes de Alemany han logrado tres victorias claves para mejorar la seguridad y condiciones de vivienda en Alemany, reparando y alquilando las unidades vacías, abriendo un centro informático, e introduciendo un consejero vocacional para ayudar a los miembros de la comunidad a encontrar trabajo.

Un grupo de residentes se ha estado reuniendo regularmente con organizadores de la comunidad del Centro Vecindario de Bernal Heights (BHNC) para trabajar en asuntos como unidades vacías, alumbrado público, y la recolección de basura. Ha sido difícil para los residentes recibir las reparaciones más esenciales que se ofrecen en las viviendas públicas, debido a años de baja financiación del gobierno federal y mal gobierno crónico.

Los residentes de Alemany lograron una victoria mayor cuando el Instituto de Vivienda empezó a reparar las unidades vacías en Alemany con el financiamiento de la ciudad. El grupo de Alemany trabajó con los residentes circundantes de Bernal, el Supervisor Tom Ammiano, Acorn y el Comité de Derechos de Viviendas para solucionar el problema de las unidades vacías. Actualmente, 15 de las 30 unidades vacías han sido reparadas y re-alquiladas, seis se han reparado y están listas para ser alquiladas mientras que ocho esperan reparaciones todavía. Esto es un paso inmenso para la seguridad de Alemany y la comunidad circundante porque

estas unidades ocupadas ahora no serán utilizadas por los narcotraficantes para actividades ilegales. Los residentes están trabajando también con el Instituto de la Vivienda para conseguir alumbrado público adecuado para hacer el área más segura de noche. Aun más impresionante, los residentes y BHNC están explorando los planes para reedificar el desarrollo entero.

El 16 de diciembre la vivienda pública de Alemany abrió un moderno centro informático en una ceremonia grande dirigida por Alice Caruthers, la directora ejecutiva del Alemany RMC, el Supervisor Tom Ammiano y BHNC. Los residentes de Alemany y sus amigos se reunieron para celebrar con oraciones, canciones y con una cena de Navidad. Alice Caruthers del RMC dijo en la apertura, “Este centro informático fue creado por residentes de Alemany que estan dedicados a hacer de Alemany un mejor lugar. Va ser un gran logro para nosotros como comunidad”.

La Corporación de Administración del Residente Alemany (RMC) denominó al sitio el Centro de Tom Ammiano, en honor al Supervisor del Distrito para nuestro vecindario que ayudó a conseguir el financiamiento para abrirlo. El centro informático tiene dos niveles: el primer nivel será un centro de desarrollo de trabajo con un horario de 9:30-12:00



Alice Caruthers, directora ejecutiva de Alemany RMC y el Supervisor Tom Ammiano celebrando la inauguración del centro informático en Alemany

los lunes por las mañanas y talleres de 4:00-6:00 p.m. los lunes por la tarde. Son atendidos por especialita laboral vocacional Tina Nguyen de BHNC. El segundo nivel tiene el centro informático principal, que estará abierto diariamente y es dirigido por los residentes de Alemany.

Otra necesidad inmediata importante en la comunidad de Alemany es la instrucción de trabajo y empleo para residentes desempleados o subempleados de Alemany. BHNC trabajó con el Alemany RMC para intrigar a Nguyen, una especialita laboral vocacional con los Servicios del Empleo para la Juventud (YES) el programa, ayudará a sus clientes a crear un curriculum vitae (resume), carta de presentación y solicitud de empleo. Nguyen es una abogada y especialita laboral vocacional, apoyando a participantes para ayudarles a seguir adelante con sus trabajos, que es la meta del programa YES. Ella saca el lado positivo y productivo en los jóvenes adultos conectándolos con empleadores locales que pueden dar los instrumentos adicionales para tener éxito en el mundo laboral. “Estoy extática de estar trabajando con los residentes en Alemany,” dijo Nguyen. “Y mi esperanza es de ser una piedra que da un paso para el joven que busca una carrera de la cual pueda sentirse orgullo”. ■



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ST. LUKE’S SUFRE MÁS RECORTES DE PRESUPUESTO Y SU ASISTENCIA MÉDICA ESTA EN RIESGO

Por Jane Martin

A pesar de la rabia de la comunidad, Sutter CPMC esta cortando más servicios en el Hospital de St. Luke, y tienen planeado cerrar St. Luke como un hospital para el 2009. St. Luke’s es el único hospital con la excepción de S.F. General, que sirve a los vecindarios más pobres en el sector sudeste de la ciudad. Mientras Sutter CMPC, el dueño no lucrativo del hospital, reclama que ellos no pueden absorber más pérdidas financieras en St. Luke, los oficiales públicos del sector de salud, están preocupados acerca de adonde irán los pacientes si el hospital cierra. El Dr. Mitch Katz, jefe del Departamento de Salud Pública, dice que San Francisco General no puede absorber la mitad del volumen de los pacientes que utilizan a St. Luke. Aunque Sutter CPMC reclame que ellos pueden continuar sirviendo a los pacientes de St. Luke’s en sus hospitales al norte de la calle Market, tal como en su campus de Pacific Heights, este plan ignora la realidad que estos otros lugares están demasiado lejos en caso de emergencia y sería más difícil para las personas que quieren visitar a su familia hospitalizada o recibir atención médica. Aunque no es lucrativo, Sutter CPMC proporciona más servicios de lujo a vecindarios más ricos, en vez de invirtir en comunidades que tienen mucha más necesidad. Muchos de sus médicos no aceptan Medi-Cal, pocos hablan español u otros idiomas comunes en nuestros vecindarios y no ofrecen los mismos servicios comunitarios como los que se ofrecen en St. Luke. “En otros lugares de CPMC localizados en vecindarios

con más dinero, hay televisores del plasma en cada cuarto, pero [CPMC] no proporciona la clase de servicio que nuestra comunidad necesita,” dijo Jane Sandoval, una enfermera que hablo en una manifestación afuera del hospital. En diciembre, enfermeras de Sutter demandaron que St. Luke permaneciera abierto como hospital y se fueron a huelga por 2 días. Durante la huelga, partidarios se manifestaron afuera del hospital y los Supervisores de San Francisco Tom Ammiano y Ross Mirkarimi hablaron, denigrando el impacto discriminatorio que el cierre propuesto tendría en afros americanos, latinos, asiáticos, y residentes que viven en los vecindarios de bajos ingresos que rodean a St. Luke. Cuidado Intensivo Neo Natal (recién nacido), es el próximo departamento en riesgo a cerrar: aunque, después de que el público protestó, Sutter demoró el cierre de la unidad para obedecer la ley de la ciudad, el cierre se ha programado de nuevo para el 13 de febrero. Aunque el hospital planea reemplazar la unidad con algún cuidado neonatal menos grave, este plan desconcertó a los médicos y enfermeras de St. Luke. “El tipo de unidad que Sutter describe no es coherente con las regulaciones del estado y Sutter dice que los recién nacidos en condición crítica pueden ser transportados al campus Pacifico del CPMC, pero eso no funcionará porque el equipo entero del transporte ha renunciado”, dice Nato Green hablando para la Asociación de Enfermeras de California. “Es sólo un recorte más en la erosión constante de los servicios de St. Luke.” Los grupos comunitarios y los pacientes

COALICIÓN PARA SALVAR AL HOSPITAL DE ST. LUKE

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Para mayor información acerca de cómo involucrarse en la planificación de este acontecimiento por favor comuníquese con la organizadora comunitaria Jane

se preocupan más y más cada día. Aunque Sutter CPMC afirma que quiere dialogar acerca del futuro del hospital—en reuniones de la ciudad que han sucedido durante los meses pasados, sus representantes han presentado repetidas veces el mismo plan de cerrar el hospital que los miembros de la comunidad rechazan. En respuesta a esta crisis progresiva, los grupos comunitarios, los pacientes, médicos, enfermeras, el personal de St. Luke y sus sindicatos se han unido en la Coalición para Salvar a St. Luke Hospital, que incluye también organizaciones que sirven a las personas mayores, los minorías, la juventud en riesgo, personas de bajos ingresos, personas con problemas de salud mental y aquellos sin vivienda. Que son quienes más

sufrirán, si el plan de CPMC de Sutter es aplicado. Los grupos comunitarios de la Misión, Excelsior, Bay View Hunters Point y vecindarios de Bernal Heights también, están participando. La Coalición se reunió en diciembre y enero para lanzar un plan vigoroso para protestar y atraer la atención pública a los apuros que enfrenta el hospital comunitario. Todos los pacientes y miembros de la comunidad están invitados a tomar parte en una vigilia de la comunidad y en acontecimientos futuros. “Es crítico que personas se involucren. Estamos llegando al momento mas critico para participar; tenemos que luchar para mantener este hospital!” dijo Eva Royale una activista comunitaria que participa en la coalición. ■

RESIDENTES LGBT DE BERNAL HEIGHTS DE TODAS LAS EDADES SE REUNEN EN BHNC

Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center y Openhouse invita a lesbianas, gays, bisexuales y transgéneros (LGBT) residentes de Bernal, amigos y aliados, a una reunión vecinal en Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center (BHNC) el Jueves 28 de febrero de 6:30 a 7:30 de la noche. Serviremos pizza y comida liviana. Todas las personas LGBT necesitan oportunidades para reunirse y crear una comunidad: hay tantos de nosotros viviendo en Bernal, pero no sabemos quienes somos. Ven y conoce a tus vecinos y aprende que estamos haciendo para llegar a los LGBT mayores que viven en Bernal y muchas veces esconden su identidad y se sienten aislados. Juntos podemos crear una comunidad para todos nosotros, de todas edades. Para más información y confirmar tu presencia, llama a Roxie Kellam al 296-8995 x 7, o Karen Garison al 206-2140 x 131. Por favor avisanos si vas a a necesitar cuidado de niños. ■

¡Queremos Oír de Usted!

El Nuevo Diario de Bernal da la bienvenida a sus opiniones y reacciones. Las cartas deben ser dirigidas a ‘Cartas al Editor’ y deben incluir el nombre del escritor, dirección, y número de teléfono de día. Estas deben ser mandadas por correo electrónico a nbj@bhnc.org, o mandadas vía correo regular a:

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El Centro Vecindario de Bernal Heights agradece a todos los patrocinadores que apoyaron nuestro trabajo en 2007.

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• Donate used items to our thrift store, Gifts on the Hill, 513 Cortland

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Call (415) 206-2140 x161 to discuss how.
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San Francisco, CA 94110

COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

Letter from Tom Ammiano

I have very exciting news to report regarding the implementation of Healthy San Francisco (HSF). Although the City suffered a setback in December when a conservative judge struck down the employer mandate component of the ordinance, the Ninth Circuit Appeals Court has since granted the City's request for a stay, allowing us to go forward full speed with the implementation of this groundbreaking health care plan. The Ninth Circuit panel, comprised of three judges, unanimously agreed in a 35 page decision that the City has a "strong likelihood" of prevailing in its argument that HSF does not violate federal law. Additionally, the judges stated that the City should be able to enforce the employer spending requirement in order to prevent "avoidable human suffering."

The Court also noted that "the general public has an interest in San Francisco residents and workers who handle their food and work in other service industries." This is excellent news not just for San Francisco, but also for any other city or state trying to come up with innovative solutions to the health care crisis, because the earlier ruling could have invalidated any number of like-minded proposals throughout the nation. The latest ruling will allow 20,000 new members to enroll in HSF immediately, truly a victo-

Healthy San Francisco, base repair in Bernal Heights, and a call for help.

ry for the working men and women of San Francisco, and thanks go not only to the City Attorney's office for their stellar representation, but to the S.F. Labor Council and the community for their hard work in making HSF a reality.

Now, an update on Cortland Ave paving: The SFWD is finishing up their work on the east slope, and the DPW contractor is busy constructing curb ramp on the west slope. We will be starting the base repair work soon, which will be a little more disruptive than the work occurring now. I will give you a head's up prior to the start and let you know what areas will be impacted first. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call us.

I am very proud to have introduced legislation to landmark the two Flowering Ash trees in front of the Bernal Heights Library. These two trees are extremely rare, have great historical significance, and need to be protected for all the future generations to enjoy.

I would like to congratulate the Alemany Resident Management Corporation and Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center for their hard work in getting the computer lab up and running. It has taken a lot of work to get to this point, and I'm proud to have worked closely with the Alemany RMC and BHNC.

On a sad note, Pali Boucher, the

founder of Rocket Dog Rescue, experienced a major house fire which took the lives of three dogs, as well as her pet birds. For those who don't know, the mission of Rocket Dog Rescue is to save dogs from shelters and find them happy homes, and they have been doing a great job for many years. I ask all who are able to donate to the Fire Emergency Fund do so by visiting the website (www.rocket-rescuedog.org), and clicking on "donate." I thank you in advance for your generosity. ■

DON'T DELAY YOUR DREAMS!

If you have been thinking about volunteering now is the time to act!

RSVP of San Francisco works with men and women 55+ to help them find that dream volunteer opportunity. You can volunteer as much or as little as you want –this is your time, after all. Volunteers put their skills honed over a lifetime, as well as tapping into undiscovered talents, to work. Visit www.rsvpsf.org to learn more, or call 415.731.3335.

MUSIC ON THE HILL

By Doug Holloway

Music on the Hill presents its 3rd concert of the season Sunday, February 24 with the "Aeolian Players." This Bay Area woodwind ensemble features principal players from the San Francisco Symphony, Ballet, and Opera orchestras in a concert of music by Ravel, Hindemith and Francaix. The Aeolian Players are Julie McKenzie, flute, Laura Griffiths, oboe, Carey Bell, clarinet, Bill Klingelhofer, horn, and Rufus Olivier, bassoon. Music on the Hill continues in its mission to present the best Bay Area classical chamber music ensembles at prices that are still affordable for all. Don't miss this wonderful event. All concerts begin at 7:00 p.m. and are held at St. Kevin's Church 704 Cortland Ave. in Bernal Hts. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. The 24 Divisadero bus stops in front of St. Kevin's Church. Tickets \$12 general/\$7 for seniors over 65 and students 18 and under. For advance ticket sales call 415-820-1429 or e-mail us at mothmuse2@yahoo.com. Visit us online at MusicOnTheHill.com. ■



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Bernal Preschool Update

By Mauricio Vela,
preschool committee member

Efforts to rebuild one of the best Preschools/Learning Center in our Community Hub are still underway in 2008. Our goal is to provide our most vulnerable families with a first-class preschool so their children will be successful upon entering kindergarten, while giving the families access to city college classes, city services, and other amenities located in the heart of Bernal. With recently released funding from the Board of Supervisors, the Committee is working to update initial drawings, update budgets, and work with City College and other participants to figure out site control. The Department of Public Health’s Environmental & Occupational Health unit has also just completed a draft health study on the Bernal Preschool. Our goal is to have the study—as well as a feasibility study update—presented in the community in the near future. You can see the DPH study on their website at www.theHDMT.org.

Concerns have surfaced since the Preschool was forced out of the library into the temporary site at Paul Revere for renovation purposes (even though the renovation still has not started seven months later). Specifically, the space of the outdoor play area is a major concern: at Bernal Library, our children had access to the new play area in the Bernal Playground which has numerous structures, lots of sand, trees, seating, and the opportunity to integrate with the other children of the neighborhood. Our current space is very small and isolated,



Current Paul Revere temporary site

The limited space of the outdoor play area, as well as storage problems and a lack of meeting spaces, is a major concern.

with only one play structure, a 10’x 10’ sandbox, and drainage and wind tunnel problems. Pools of stagnant water—as well as water from the roof which pours directly onto the play area—has impacted the staff’s ability to run a healthy and successful program. Enrollment, as well as overall morale, is down. Some additional concerns are the sand from the sandbox blowing into the children’s eyes and ears, storage problems, and lack of community interaction. The classroom lacks meeting space for school and mental health staff, and there is a need for small repairs by someone with carpenter skills. If you are interested in helping,

please let us know.

Despite the challenges, the Save the Bernal Preschool Committee is still moving forward, and committed to developing its vision for a wonderful, well designed, green preschool/learning center—not only for the most vulnerable, but for all families in Bernal. Remember: these babies are our babies. ■

To get involved in the creation of the New Bernal Preschool/Learning Center, contact Armando Vasquez – Bernal Preschool project manager at 425-1744 or Mauricio Vela at mauriciovela@aol.com.

VOLUNTEER IN BERNAL HEIGHTS’ SCHOOLS

By Darren Gapultos

Public schools in the Bernal Heights neighborhood like Paul Revere Elementary and Middle School, Junipero Serra Elementary School, and Leonard Flynn Elementary School are in need of your help to improve student performance. To help our local schools, volunteers can assist a teacher in the classroom, tutor students one-on-one, cultivate a school garden, share a computer skill, or much more. If you would like get involved, contact San Francisco School Volunteers (SFSV) to let us know!

SFSV recruits, supports, and engages a community of volunteers who inspire public school students to achieve their full potential, and currently SFSV is the largest source of trained volunteers serving the specific needs of teachers and students in public schools throughout San Francisco. We support more than 2,100 volunteers in virtually all of San Francisco’s K-12 public schools, but there are still more than 200 teachers hoping for someone like you to volunteer.

Teachers overwhelmingly agree that SFSV volunteers play a vital role in students’ success: 96% of teachers surveyed in May 2006 agreed that SFSV volunteers enhanced their teaching, and not only did students’ academic skills increase, but their self-esteem and confidence similarly improved. To become a San Francisco School Volunteer, we ask for a commitment of one hour a week, but we do have one day volunteer opportunities as well. ■

Sign up today! Go to www.sfsv.org or call 415.749.3700 x3008

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COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

Initiative to Address Liquor Store Problems

By Gerardo Sandoval

In June of this year, I am putting forward a ballot initiative that will place important restrictions on one of San Francisco's most pervasive and insidious issues: the proliferation of liquor stores in the poorest parts of our City.

San Francisco has the highest concentration of liquor stores in the entire State of California, and the heaviest concentration occurs in neighborhoods like the Tenderloin, the Mission, and the Bayview. This over-concentration takes advantage of the many individuals that suffer from the ravages of alcoholism, particularly when the stores specialize in selling cheap "fortified" liquor. All in all, the situation contributes to homelessness and petty crime, and takes a terrible toll on families and children.

I believe we can take reasonable steps to push back this over concentration. The ballot measure I have proposed will not affect existing liquor stores, i.e., stores with a license to sell liquor "off site." Instead, it will prohibit new stores within 1,000 feet of existing stores. It will also prohibit new stores within 1,000 feet of schools, parks and libraries. The measure will also require that new liquor stores devote no more than fifteen percent of their space to the sale of alcohol, and limit the space devoted to fortified liquors to no more than one-half of one percent of shelf space. These provisions come from the experience of walking into a package store and finding that it stocks

one brand of bread and fifteen brands of fortified wine.

I know the measure I am proposing is not a solution to alcoholism. In the near future, we need to find a dedicated revenue stream that can pay for alcohol and substance abuse programs. We should think about taking a small percentage of our existing sales tax, and without raising it, dedicate some of it for social programs. I will be having hearings on such a proposal sometime in the next few months. But in the meantime, we can develop sensible, reasonable policies that are a step toward safer and healthier communities. I ask that you join me in this effort and support this measure in June. ■

AN EASY WAY TO IMPROVE CHILDREN'S HEALTH

By Senator Carole Migden

Children from low-income families who are at the greatest risk for childhood illness and obesity are also the least likely to be breastfed. A no-cost way to ensure healthier children, breastfeeding has long been recognized as a proven disease prevention strategy, and recent studies have documented the role breastfeeding plays in preventing childhood obesity.

That's why I am thrilled that the Governor signed my legislation, Senate Bill 22 (SB 22) into law. SB 22 promotes breast-

feeding by expanding outreach to low-income women through the California WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling program, which utilizes peer counselors from the community trained to coach and help new mothers maintain breastfeeding for up to a year. SB 22 will increase the number of these successful programs in communities with low breastfeeding rates, and will also improve Medi-Cal access to breast pumps and other lactation assistance.

Currently, only 40% of new moms leave the hospital breastfeeding exclusively, even though studies recommend

women breastfeed exclusively for the first six months in order to pass on the greatest benefits from breast milk.

An effective weight control tool, breast feeding affects an infant's metabolism differently than formula. Studies have shown that if more mothers breastfed their infants, 20% of childhood obesity cases nationwide could be prevented. In California alone, this could mean up to 48,000 fewer overweight children and adolescents each year. There is no better time to start health consciousness than at birth. ■

BEBE CASTAING DAY



BHNC's board and community members celebrate with outgoing board member and neighborhood activist, Bebe Castaing, on December 20, 2007, officially Bebe Castaing Day in San Francisco as proclaimed by the Board of Supervisors.

JOSEPH SHOOK

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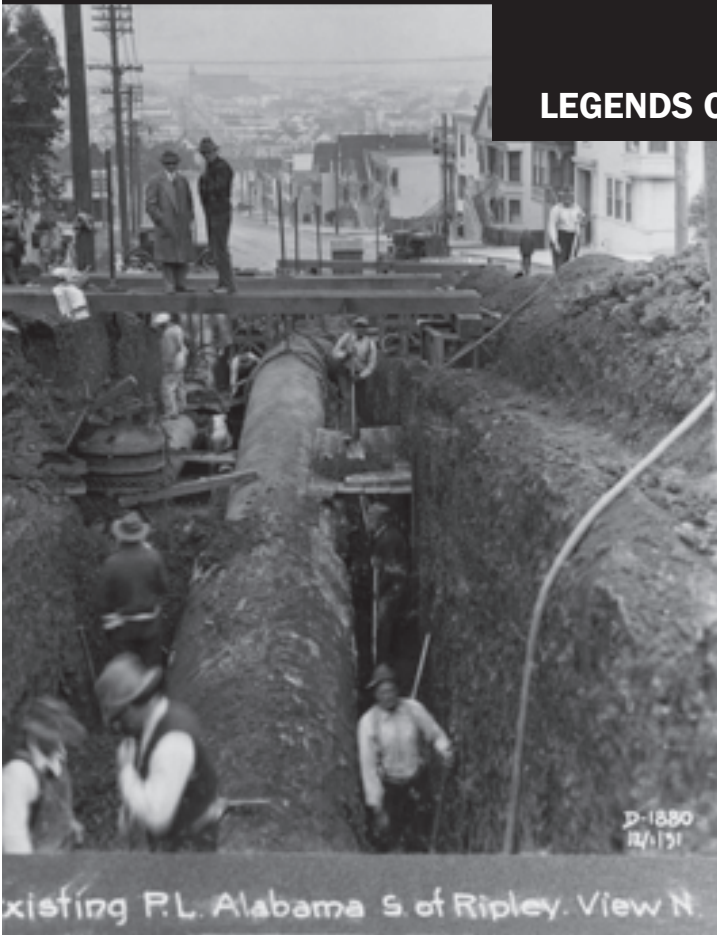
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LEGENDS OF THE HILL

BERNAL HEIGHTS HISTORY

By Terry Milne

The Water Department was busy with construction of a supply line to the Mission District in December, 1931. The excavation was at the Alabama/Ripley intersection, and this view looks north toward Rutledge Street. The job was probably finished in sixty days or less, with the water coming from the University Mound Reservoir in the Portola District which supplies most of Bernal Heights. Eighty years later, all the houses in the photo are still there.

Today, the neighborhood is going through deja vu with this building project. The seemingly endless construction that has blocked a section of Powhattan Avenue for many, many months is replacing and upgrading these pipes which come over the hill from the vicinity of Farmers' Market. Tunneling under the hill, today's construction crew moves north to come up at a large street-blocking excavation at the historic intersection—Alabama/Ripley.

ALL-AGE LGBT BERNAL RESIDENTS GET TOGETHER AT BHNC

Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center and openhouse invite lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Bernal residents, friends, and allies to a community gathering at Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center (BHNC), Thursday, February 28 from 6:30-7:30 pm. We will provide pizza and other light fare.

All LGBT people need opportunities to gather and create community: there are so many of us living in Bernal, but we don't know who we are. Come and meet your neighbors and also learn about how we are reaching out to LGBT seniors who live in Bernal and are often in the closet and isolated.

Together, we can create community for all of us, of all ages. For more information and to RSVP, call Roxie Kellam 296-8995 x7, or Karen Garrison @ 206-2140 x131. Please let us know if you need childcare. ■

THE REAL DEAL: NOTES FROM CORTLAND

By Darcy Lee

This episode: Sine curves; 2008; the weather; no resolutions for me; and last but not least special folks thanks.

Life is a series of ups and downs—sometimes within a day I can feel so optimistic about the minutiae of information and energy that comes into my life, and then suddenly my attitude or feelings can abruptly change. What I find interesting is that my situation does not change, just how I look at it. I sometimes sort of play with this and flex the brain muscle that controls my attitude: My dear friend, Dena and I used to write down our three biggest concerns of the week on a piece of paper, fold it up, and open it up a week later. It was amazing how often the concerns had disappeared by then.

So this year, rather than make resolutions (they feel a little too much like rules that I should break), I am determined to do stuff that in the end (or afterwards) makes me feel good. Now the trick here is not things that make me feel better at that moment, but a little later—for instance, I have been avoiding announcing the next meeting of our **Cortland Merchants Association**. In some ways, it means starting up with folks that do not want, or do not have the time, to participate and it feels a little like pulling a wagon up hill. However, after a meeting I am always left with a good feeling of community, and that we are saying thank you to Bernal Heights. So today I am focusing on how the meetings and community always make me feel good. I also offer special thanks to all the officers that were voted in this year: **Ken Shelf**, vice president; **Lester Zeidman**, treasurer; and **Mark Tetrault**, secretary.

Weather is a huge topic if one works in retail. Folks talk to me about the weather. I find In SF that there is constant murmur/complaint about the cold and the fog and lack of summer. Then when a warm spell hits and we haul the fan down from our attic there are lots of ooooooooo and ahhhhhhhhhhhs about how the heat does not agree with us and when will the fog roll in. In days gone by, I used to wake up on these incredible sunny days we get in winter and think myself the luckiest person in the world for living in this weather pattern. Of late, I have noticed that my thoughts have changed due to how much information we are exposed to. Now I think ,”Wow, what an amazing day, but is this normal? Is this melting more of our ice-caps?” My old comfort of lovely Bay Area weather has changed, so one of the gifts I am giving myself back this year is that I am going to enjoy those days. Instead of worrying, I am going to give to one of the many organizations that are helping to stop the destruction of our environment.

More weather talk: the large storm was in some ways exciting, something so large and out of our control. The big guy, **Good Life Grocery**, was closed and we followed

After a meeting of the Cortland Merchants Association, I am always left with a good feeling of community.

suit. I sat on my couch writing orders to fill up our sort-of-empty-after-xmas store, and it felt so much like a snow day from when I was little. Now, afterwards, it is so sad to see the trees that suffered. The city has an economical way of topping the trees to trim them, and it wreaks havoc when they become heavy with water and the winds hit. Mike Boss of **Rock and Rose Landscaping** in Bernal knows a lot about this. What can be done to correct this? Who is in charge of how the trees are trimmed and when? If there is

a tree by your home and if it survived, adopt it and make sure it is maintained properly. If you lost a tree, find out how it can be replaced. They are such an important part of our daily visual landscape.

So I am going to write an email now announcing my next meeting of the CMA because I know in the end something good will come of it, and make my bed carefully because it is nice to get into a made bed at night.

Here is a gift to you, a special recognition to folks I know that we are lucky to have right here in the hood. Say thanks to these folks when you see them, they inspire me with all the kindness they put out daily:

Sister Kate—thanks, Sister, you deal with folks all day that have gone astray and try give them the light and love we all deserve. Thanks for helping the folks no one wants to deal with and thanks for stopping to pick up garbage on the side of the road. You amaze me.

Michael Blecker—the work you have done with Swords and Plowshares all these years is so admirable to me. You also help folks that have no where to turn and have been used by our system. Your strength and stamina and resources are inspiring.

John Perry—you just care so much and put your energy behind what you believe for BH and the world. You never just talk, you do.

Beth Roy—a community figure that cares and give and then gets up in the morning to figure out how she can care and give some more. Check out her books!

Joseph Smooke—thanks for making Bernal your cause. I hope I can help the BHNC more in 2008. You bring together so many of the great parts of this hood, and try and make them work.

So appreciate SF...we are lucky to be in this little zone of sanity in a crazy world and thanks Mr. Newsom for trying.

Sine curves happen. ■

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COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

A VISION OF THE WORLD:

Arch Williams and the Future of the Bernal Library Mural

By Jeff Lester

As the Bernal branch library begins its final planning stages of renovation, questions in the community have arisen as to what current features should be kept and what features should be discarded. The eye-catching mural in the front of the library is one such feature. As

ist of the mural,” says Cervantes. “And he was a Bernal neighbor, lived over on Crescent. It’s really important to us as a mural institution to try and preserve this mural, as Arch is one of the pioneers of the mural movement. He was part of the Haight Ashbury Mural Workshop.” Although the current plans for library

on the back of the library. That doesn’t work, in my mind. It sets a bad precedent. I’m saying, let’s preserve the mural on the front. The mural is important to the library. It has its own history and it is part of the history of the library.”

Williams painted the mural in 1981, going through a workshop process that solicited ideas, designs and drawings from the members of the Bernal community. “The director of the library at the time was very supportive of that process,” notes Cervantes. “As were members of the San Francisco Art Commission. A mural like this had to go through a lot of steps to get approved. You had to secure the funding, which took a long time to do. And at the time, there was very little money for this kind of artwork.”

The mural was completed in October of 1982. Materials now in use by muralists—paints laced with varnishes and improved acrylics to resist weather damage—were not yet invented, so the mural has very little protection against the elements. For that reason, Cervantes and others hope the mural might be restored “so people can see how bright and cheerful and beautiful it really was. Let’s preserve this mural that represents Arch’s legacy at his best, the history of the library, and its commitment to the community.”

Such a sentiment is shared by Timothy W. Drescher, author of the books *San Francisco Bay Area Murals and Wall Power*. “The mural on the Bernal branch library is an especially appropriate selection from Arch’s mural work,” says Drescher, “because it demonstrates how sophisticated was his understanding of space, especially architectural space. When Arch first got interested in murals, almost uniquely among United States muralists he traveled to Mexico to study

[David Alfaro] Siqueiros’ conceptions of space and how they functioned in mural design. Arch even purchased a 3-D camera to record examples of Siqueiros’ applications of his ideas. (Other muralists studied with Siqueiros, but few brought back his spatial ideas.)”

Comments Drescher on the mural’s design, “Note how he uses the interior corner as a place from which parts of the design emerge. Not only does the design ‘hide’ the corner, but in fact it uses its three-dimensionality to give punch to the design. It is no accident that the right side of the image shows ‘the world today’ emerging from an ancient pyramid, which is given extra architectural presence by Arch’s use of the corner a la Siqueiros.”

“I hope this helps explain why Arch was so important to the San Francisco mural movement,” adds Drescher. “Another reason for his stature is that in all his works he sought to articulate ideas of peace and decency within the complex context of our world today. He loved music. He read. He studied. He drew. All these passions contributed to his mural work. Perhaps most of all, on a personal level, Arch Williams was a gentle soul, who devoted his life to publicly articulating a vision of decency and community. The Bernal Library mural is a powerful example of this vision, and of his success in realizing it.”

Ultimately, according Cervantes, the fate of the mural “depends on the community and if they want it. If there are enough people that want the mural to stay, then it will. I think there are people who don’t recognize the time and the process put into it, but I think it’s still very reflective of a cross-cultural community. I hope Bernal will continue to be that community.” ■



An interior corner of the Bernal Heights Branch Library

Precita Eyes mural historian Susan Cervantes puts it, “there are two camps—one for preserving the mural, and one who don’t appreciate the mural and its history.”

At the core of Cervantes’ argument for the mural is an appreciation for the historical legacy for the creator, Arch Williams. “Arch Williams is the original art-

renovation involve installing a ramp that will obscure part of the work, Cervantes isn’t worried about that—“80% or more would still be visible, so you still have a wonderful piece of artwork here”—as much as those who would want the mural moved completely, or removed to a lesser seen section of the library. “Some are suggesting taking the mural and putting it



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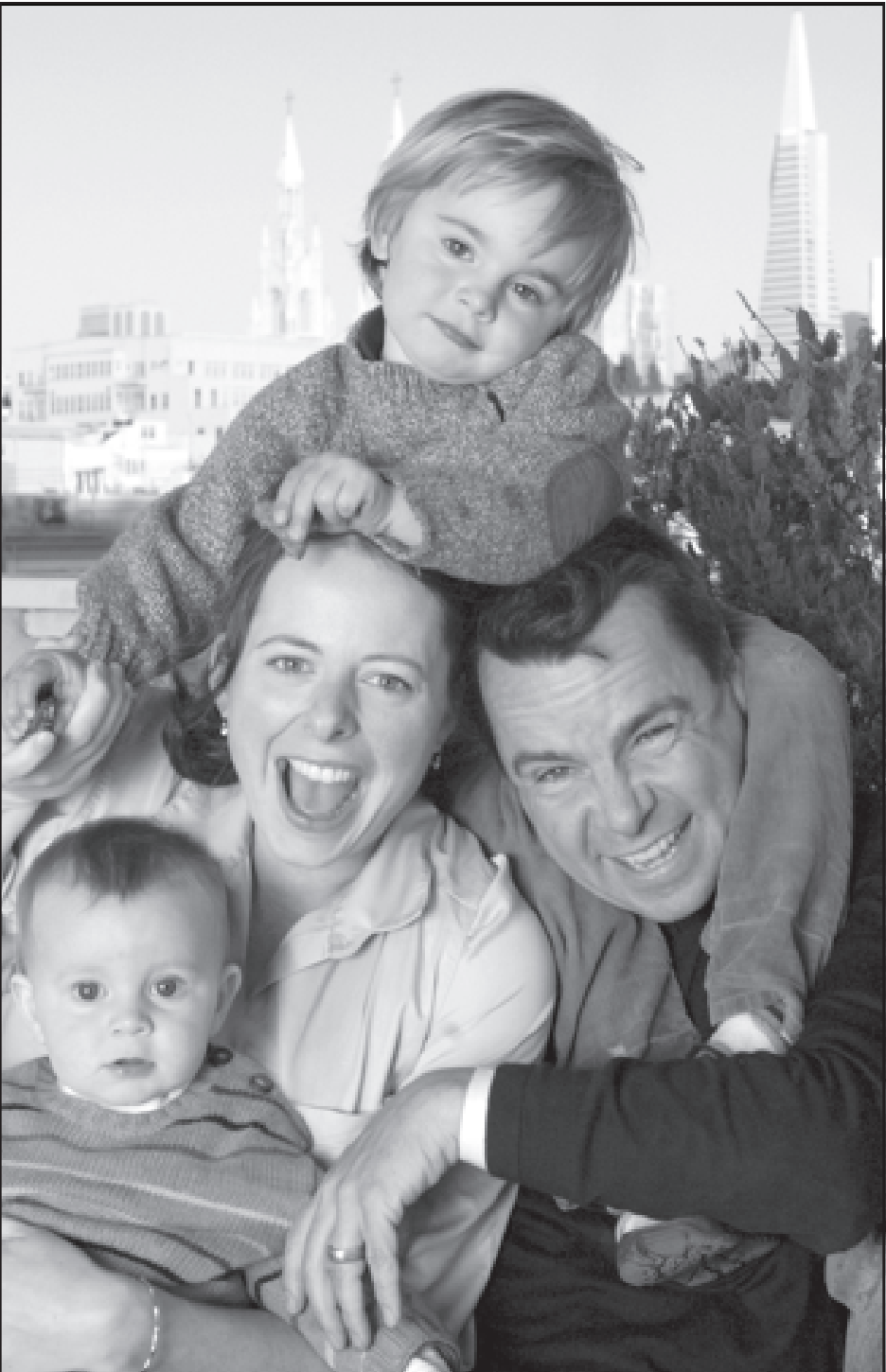
Bernal Heights was honored in January when three official city landmark designations were won by neighborhood trees. The pair of trees that flank the entrance of the Bernal Branch Library on Cortland Avenue, a small tree on the north side of Bernal Heights Park, and the tall tree on Valencia Street next to St. Luke’s Hospital received the recognition from the Board of Supervisors. The tree landmarks were nominated by Supervisor Tom Ammiano.

The pair of flowering ash trees (*Fraxinus ornus*) in the front of the library are rare in San Francisco. Even though they exhibit some street wear, they are large for the species and burst forth in delicate flowers in the spring. Their exceptional qualities are highlighted in *Trees of San Francisco*, a basic guidebook by Mike Sullivan. At the top of Folsom Street, where it curves to the gateway to Bernal Heights Park, a blue elderberry tree (*Sambucus mexicana*) sits next to the street. It is an uncommon tree, and this aged example has natural historical significance, being a genetic remnant of trees native to San Francisco. It contributes to the Natural Areas designation of the hilltop park. The Moreton Bay fig tree (*Ficus macrophylla*) at St. Luke’s Hospital on Valencia Street is connected to California history. It was planted in front of the Bancroft Library which was located at the site until 1906. The library building is long gone, but the exceedingly rare, majestic tree remains, visible from much of Bernal Heights. It is also profiled in *Trees of San Francisco*.

These Bernal landmarks join about a dozen individual trees and the line of palms down Dolores Street as officially recognized and protected city landmarks. The status affords some protection for important specimens in San Francisco’s urban forest against damage or random removal. The city ordinance sets out specific requirements for nomination of meritorious trees. Nominations are sent to the Urban Forest Council (SF Department of the Environment) for evaluation and public hearings. If the tree meets criteria for exceptional status, the nomination is forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for landmark designation. Are there other Bernal trees that should be recognized with this honor? ■



Urban Forest Council members (from left) Terry Milne, Jocelyn Cohen, and Mike Boss



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OIL CHANGE

COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

Founder of Rocket Dog Rescue Loses Home

By Jeff Lester

On the first and third Sundays of each month, if you're on 24th Street near Castro around noon, you might come across the mobile adoptions held by Pali Boucher and Rocket Dog Rescue—you'll know it by the sounds of dogs happily yipping, barking, and occasionally howling as RDR volunteers show them off to passerby. For over six years, Rocket Dog Rescue has helped save thousands of homeless and abandoned animals from euthanasia in overcrowded Bay Area shelters by taking them in and finding them new owners, and such mobile adoptions are a key tactic in introducing potential new pets to potential new owners.

At first glance, the first mobile adoption of the year, held on January 6, 2008, seemed no different from the others: a young girl dressed in pink skipped from dog to dog; a smiling couple proudly held a shivering Chihuahua while a volunteer explained the paperwork they would fill out; and Rocket Dog Rescue founder Pali Boucher spoke to adoptees about their new dogs.

And yet this mobile adoption is different from the rest in a subtle, but crucial, way: it is taking place just two weeks after Pali Boucher's home has burned down.

On December 23, 2007, Boucher had been gone from her Bernal Heights home no more than thirty-five minutes, when she was told it was on fire. She returned to find firemen extinguishing the flames and, on the sidewalk, the dead bodies of Daisy, Stewie, and Guthrie, the three foster dogs for whom she'd been caring. Also dead were her beloved parrot of ten years, Chester, and an injured pigeon, Parker.

At the mobile adoption in January, Boucher moved easily from dog to dog, greeting volunteers and , helping people fill out paperwork. But when asked how she was doing, she would lower her voice and say, "I'm a wreck, I'm a wreck. I just don't think I can hold it together."

Later, in a brief phone interview, Boucher elaborates. "I think this is the single most devastating thing I've been through. Not for the loss of all my personal belongings, but because of the loss of those animal's lives. I never thought something like this would happen to me."

Although the fire report indicates the fire was started accidentally, Boucher, who has saved the lives of thousands of animals, finds her sense of responsibility weighing on her. "The loss of the animals hurts me so deeply. I feel awful, like it's my fault. There's no way to put into words how it feels. It feels like you failed."

As Boucher waits to see what her landlord will decide about the apartment ("It's up in the air as to what he's going to say."), she finds herself contemplating her future, and that of Rocket Dog Rescue. "As much as I love Bernal Heights, maybe it's time to move forward with the goal of making an urban sanctuary, creating a space for Rocket Dog Rescue where we can provide shelter for more dogs."

After thinking for a moment, Boucher adds, "My neighbors came to me the day after the fire, and they told me how much they enjoyed having the animals there. They missed the sounds of the animals running up and down the stairs. And I was so gratified to hear that, you know? Because you never know how your neighbors feel, you always worry that you're making too much noise, or that they don't



Rocket Dog Rescue founder Pali Boucher

The kindness of people to me during this time has been a tremendous help.

like having so many animals around. I was so glad they told me."

Currently, Boucher is staying at Kosi-ta's Pet Grooming on Bennington & Cortland. When asked if people can donate to her directly to help her get back on her feet, Boucher says simply, "Yes, some people have donated to me directly, which I am grateful for." Although Boucher lost all of her possessions and nearly a decade of her own artwork, this brief admission is all she says before returning to the subject of Rocket Dog Rescue. "And Rocket Dog Rescue still needs donations. We definitely need the funds to keep rescuing dogs."

"One thing, though: in the past, people would donate dog food, and we could keep it at my place. But now that we don't have room for that, we're asking people to give gift cards—go to their local pet store or a bigger chain and get gift

cards so we can use those to buy food as we need it. And donated kennel space would be incredible! Since the fire, we've been paying for boarding for rescued animals until we can find a foster family for them."

"And, of course," concludes Boucher, "we'd love for people to continue to step up and foster animals."

After a moment, Boucher says, "People have been incredible. Doing dog rescue you can get into a bubble, just your own little world focused only on what needs to be done, and what you need to do, and you can fall out of touch with people. Coming out of that bubble, and having to deal with people again, deal with the world again, has probably been good for me." The founder of Rocket Dog Rescue, continuing to find homes for dogs even as she herself is currently homeless, thinks for a moment and adds simply, "Just the kindness of people to me during this time has been a tremendous help." ■

Donations to Pali Boucher can be sent in her name to P.O. Box 460826, San Francisco, CA 94146. Donations to Rocket Dog Rescue, labeled accordingly, can also be sent to this same address.



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REMEMBRANCES



Erick Balderas
(1986 - 2007)

On Sunday morning, November 18, at 3:20am, Erick Balderas, 21, was dropping off two friends at 23rd and Treat, when a car pulled up and opened fire leaving Erick fatally injured.

Erick moved from Mexico to Bernal Heights where he was enrolled in Paul Revere Elementary. He continued his education at Horace Mann Middle School and attended John O’Connell High School. The eldest of four children, Erick is survived by three younger brothers, Giovanni Louis, age 10; Dominick Angel, age 7; and Brandon Emiliano, age 2. Erick was the proud son of Angelica Garcia and Jose Luis Valadez, and also leaves many aunts, uncles, cousins, and his maternal grandparents.

A respectable and kind hearted person, Erick was very helpful, offering advice to many of his younger siblings, cousins, and friends. He lived on Banks Street with his aunt and cousins and would call his mom (who moved the immediate family to San Jose a few years earlier) every day. Like most young adults, he enjoyed video games and Hip Hop, his favorite artists being 50 Cent

and Bone Thugs & Harmony, and even wrote lyrics himself.

At time of his death, he was working two jobs. He was a corps member of the San Francisco Conservation Corps where he continued his education and worked on projects, he worked with his aunt at a hotel. He enjoyed a hard day’s work.

The family is now trying to move back to San Francisco to be closer to their extended family, and set up the “Erick Balderas Memorial Fund.” Folks can send checks to the “Erick Balderas Memorial Fund” c/o Mission Area Credit Union, 2940 16th Street, Suite 305, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Barbara Walters
(1948 - 2007)

Barbara Walters, a long-time Ellsworth neighbor, passed away on December 22. A warm and caring person who made friends easily, Barbara was a familiar figure on Bernal Heights hill where she walked her dog, Daisy, every day. Barbara was instrumental in getting people to know one another and holding block parties with neighbors, especially around the holidays. An avid tennis player who enjoyed traveling and excelled in the arts, especially photography and painting with water colors, Barbara will be sorely missed. She is survived by three brothers, nieces and a nephew, all of whom live back East.

A memorial program will be held to celebrate Barbara’s life on Saturday, February 16 at 12:30pm at the Golden Gate Yacht Club, 1 Yacht Road in the San Francisco Marina Smallcraft Harbor. Those who knew her well are invited to attend. ■

Doing Something about Gang and Street Violence

By Mauricio Vela

As a follow up to the Erick Balderas obituary in this issue of the NBJ, I wanted to let you know how the Balderas family—and the two brothers who were also shot but survived—are doing and about the opportunities to get involved to help the City address the gang and street violence.

All three young men grew up in Bernal and attended Paul Revere Elementary School and Horace Mann Middle School. The Balderas family is attempting to move back to San Francisco to be closer to the extended family already in the neighborhood. They are also working to obtain additional public assistance and have opened an Erick Balderas Memorial Fund at the Mission Credit Union where we as a community can contribute to the healing and future of the family. The family would like to thank Supervisor Ammiano and community members who have already given to the fund.

The two brothers—anonymous at the family’s request because no arrests have been made—were discharged from San Francisco General Hospital and are now in a physical rehabilitation center. While the older brother’s girlfriend and daughter struggle to relocate from the location

where the crime took place, the younger brother and family are trying to secure an ADA accessible unit to help with future physical complications. We are working with Supervisor Ammiano’s office to put pressure on the DA’s Victim Assistance services and accomplish this.

There were 98 homicides in San Francisco in 2007 and seven in 2008. As for current City policy and prevention and intervention efforts, the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families Citizens’ Advisory Committee has scheduled a February 7 hearing to figure out how many of the homicides involved youth under the age of 24; review both the draft of the Mayor’s violence prevention plan and all funded social services responsible for youth gang and street violence prevention and intervention efforts. We want to hear from victims, families, and others who have experience with street violence, learn what has and hasn’t worked, and listen to new ideas and solutions on how to reduce gang and street violence. It is going to take all of us—not just the service providers—to get control of the situation. ■

For more info, contact mauriciovela@aol.com or call (415) 550-6487.

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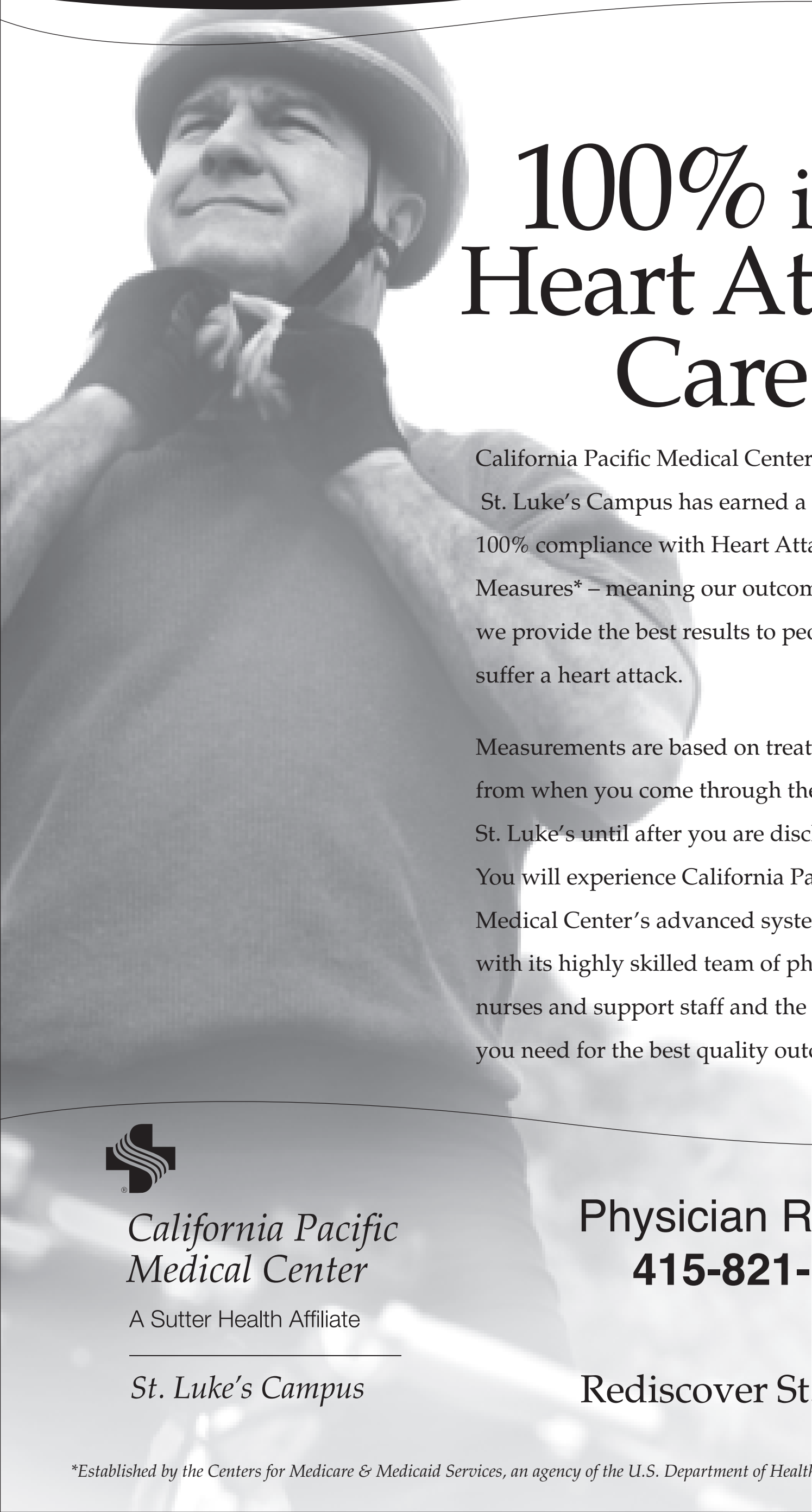
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